

thorough investigation and accountability that Ms. Abu Akleh's family, the Secretary of State, I, and others have called for. That would further jeopardize the safety of journalists everywhere who courageously risk their lives to gather facts and inform the public. This year alone, according to the Committee to Protect Journalists, at least 38 journalists have been killed, 294 have been imprisoned, and 64 are missing. Whether Shireen Abu Akleh's killing was a tragic mistake or the result of a reckless or intentional act, there must be a full accounting. And if it was intentional and if those responsible are not brought to justice, then the Leahy Law must be applied.

#### IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, throughout my 48 years in the Senate, I worked to uphold the American tradition of a humane immigration policy and fought to advance comprehensive immigration reform. As an advocate for refugees and asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution around the world, I have been committed to allocating resources to help welcome these vulnerable individuals and families to my home State. And I did my best to directly support the Vermont communities that do so much to help resettle and embrace them.

My office also has directly assisted thousands of Vermonters with visas, refugee resettlement, asylum, and other immigration casework. Over the past 48 years, this work has helped children and adults receive lifesaving medical treatment by enabling nurses, doctors, and dentists to join our short-staffed hospitals and clinics. It has also helped H-2A farmworkers to arrive in Vermont in time for harvest, work that is critical to our food supply and the success of our farms. My office has assisted students, scholars, engineers, musicians, athletes, and so many others to participate in and help grow our educational institutions and workforce, in the process often reuniting families separated for years. My staff and I have had the honor of witnessing Vermonters of all ages and from all walks of life realize their dreams to become citizens of the United States of America.

Working with Vermonters with diverse backgrounds from all across the globe, I have come to know their struggles and hardships as well as their successes and achievements. Some were fleeing war and persecution, others pursuing their own dreams and seeking a better life for their children. With great courage and determination and the assistance of so many caring and generous Vermonters, these New Americans have not only improved their own lives, they have also brought a great and lasting benefit to our State. Vermont, like the rest of this great Nation, is built on the contributions of immigrants.

The stories I hear from Vermonters who call my office has helped to inform

my work in Washington. After countless concerned Vermonters contacted my office as tens of thousands of Afghans fled persecution, I used my position as chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee to ensure adequate resources were available for resettlement in Vermont and elsewhere in the U.S. And when Ukrainians fled Russian attacks on their country to find safety in Vermont and elsewhere in the U.S., we appropriated funds to help them.

As former chair and ranking member of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I played a central role in shaping Federal immigration policy. At the forefront of my immigration priorities was passing legislation that incorporated the needs of Vermont agriculture and industry because I have long recognized the value immigration reform can have on state and local economies.

I also sponsored the H-2A Improvement Act, a bill to include dairy workers in the agricultural work visa program. And I have been a lead sponsor of the Agricultural Job Opportunities, Benefits, and Security Act to legalize the existing undocumented agricultural workforce in order to help America's farmers stay a productive and a vital part of the American economy.

While the reforms I believe are needed across our entire immigration system have not yet been completed, I am proud that during the 113th Congress, the Senate made significant progress toward this goal by passing S.744, the Border Security, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Modernization Act, with an overwhelming bipartisan vote. This legislation sought to enhance border security, create a workable and accurate electronic workplace verification system, reform some of the legal immigration system, and provide a tough but achievable pathway to citizenship for the estimated 11 million undocumented immigrants in the country. It contained important long-standing initiatives that would directly benefit Vermont agriculture and industry, including important improvements to the agricultural temporary worker visa program, and reforms that both streamlined and strengthened oversight of the job-creating immigrant investor EB-5 Regional Center Program.

Nearly a decade ago, I re-introduced the Refugee Protection Act. This bill would improve protections for refugees and asylum seekers and fulfill the U.S. obligations under the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. And I was a leading voice to demand an end to the expanded use of family detention for mothers and children fleeing violence in Central America. Beginning in 2003, I fought to end discrimination based on sexual orientation in our immigration laws through the Uniting American Families Act, legislation that would allow U.S. citizens and lawful permanent residents to petition for their foreign same-sex partners to come to the United States through the family im-

migration system. In June 2013, the Supreme Court decided *United States v. Windsor*, which held that the Federal Government cannot discriminate against married same-sex couples for the purpose of Federal benefits and responsibilities. The result was the fulfillment of my goal to ensure that married same-sex couples have full immigration rights.

Thirty years ago, I visited a refugee camp. I brought my camera, as I do everywhere, so that I could show people back in Washington the human toll of an issue. A man there encouraged me to take his picture. I looked at his worn and weary face through the range finder. We sat and talked afterward, and he said simply: "Don't forget people like me." The black and white photo hung above my desk for 30 years; every day I came to work, he looked at me, saying, "You don't know my name, you don't speak my language, there's nothing I can do to help you—but what are you doing for people like me?" That photo and the question it provokes helped guide my approach to immigration legislation and other policy areas over the years.

So much more needs to be done, but we must also remember our accomplishments and always honor the immigrants who have made this country a great nation.

#### AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I have been a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee for 48 years, since I was elected in 1974. I have helped to write nine farm bills, and I have overseen the creation of programs that have helped farmers, food systems, and consumers alike. Throughout the years, I have been proud to bring born-in-Vermont ideas back to DC.

I was warned when I first came to the Senate not to get on the Agriculture Committee because I would never be able to get off. And they were right. But that has been just fine with me because the work we have done on this committee and in the farm bills has always been so important, and the work has been bipartisan, in the best tradition of the Senate.

I have always worked to make healthy food accessible to everyone. In 1988, I authored the Hunger Prevention Act, which improved child nutrition and SNAP programs and provided other hunger relief. In 1994, I worked to provide funding for WIC, provide milk to low-income students, fund school breakfast programs, encourage organic foods at school lunches, and expand WIC at farmers markets, and promote healthy eating habits for children through the better Nutrition and Health for Children Act. And in 2010, I authored the Healthy Hunger Free Kids Act, which created the Farm to School Program, which brings locally grown food into schools.

I have been proud to advocate for small- and mid-sized dairy farms,

which are integral to the history and fabric of Vermont. Family dairies have struggled and I have been honored to lead the work in the Senate to find the right model to help family dairy farms manage risk. After several innovative models, our current one, the Dairy Margin Coverage Program, seems to be working, and I hope that it will be renewed and improved in the next farm bill.

In 2018, I advocated to bring one of the Regional Dairy Business Innovation Centers to Vermont, which now serves the entire Northeast, supporting the development, production, marketing, and distribution of dairy products.

This committee has also been home to some of the most significant Federal forest conservation laws. In 1990, I oversaw the creation of the Forest Legacy Program, which protects private forests through conservation easements or land purchases. Since 1990, the Forest Legacy Program has conserved more than 2.8 million acres of forest land across all 50 States and U.S. Territories. And in 2008, using the historic Vermont town forest system as a model, I led the creation of the Community Forest and Open Space Conservation Program, which allows communities to acquire and conserve forests that provide public access, recreation, protect water supplies and wildlife habitat, serve as demonstration sites for forest landowners, and provide economic benefits from these products.

One of my proudest achievements was as chairman of the Agriculture Committee in 1990, when I authored the Organic Food Production Act, which established the USDA Organic program. What was predicted to be a “crunchy granola sideshow” has become a nearly \$58 billion industry.

I have so valued that this is, perhaps, the least partisan of all Senate committees. Please be reminded of this if you glance up at my portrait in 2023 and beyond. Keep in mind that while we will have our differences, farm bills have always been bipartisan, and we have always come together to support our farmers and rural communities.

#### CYBERSECURITY AND ASSURED MICROELECTRONICS

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, the most important technology connections are ones between people. Vermont is a place where people connecting is not only important to life, but is the very fabric of it. It was natural, I think, for me to see cyberspace as a continuation of connections like in Vermont. It is why I created one of the first websites in the Senate. It is why I have done hundreds of video chats with Vermont schoolchildren. And it is why I have ensured that among the billions of dollars of the Federal budget appropriated for cyberspace programs the executive agencies pay attention to the special perspective we have in Vermont.

For all the machines connected to each other that make up cyberspace,

the real connectivity is between the people using them, coding their software, and fabricating their hardware. Any cyber specialist will tell you the weakest link in security is the humans who use or create the programs and hardware. But they will also tell you that humans have the potential to be the most powerful part of the network.

Much of my work has been about improving the way the human connections strengthen the technological ones. I created the Trusted Foundry Program and have supported its evolution, so people in the U.S. Government and critical industries know that the chips they put in their equipment come from a fab that has the highest level of security against meddling by bad actors. The men and women in Essex Junction, VT, at GlobalFoundries work at such a fab, and the IBMers there administer the program nation-wide.

At Champlain College, I established the Leahy Center for Digital Investigation, so there would be a place where protecting and serving people in the physical world benefits from the online one. Their recent work to educate on collection of data from crime scenes that meets evidentiary standards for the Internet of Things—all the connected devices that now exist in our lives—has set a standard for the Nation, and their work with the U.S. Secret Service has improved the work at their premier cyber school for law enforcement in Alabama.

This summer, I am proud that Norwich University announced at Vermont's first annual Cyber Symposium that their School of Cybersecurity and Advanced Computing would bear my name. I am proud because, for years, their students and faculty have been a national treasure. Among many, many achievements, Norwich created and I secured funds for the wildly successful DECIDE program for command and control cyber exercises with the Department of Homeland Security, now in its fourth expansion in this year's omnibus. Norwich's expertise in helping local governments prepare for and respond to cyber events, their education opportunities for undergrads, secondary degrees, guardsmen and reservists, and their upcoming expansion of their cybersecurity discipline to fully embrace the roles of information operations, machine learning, and AI-assisted decision-making in security, are all ways they are showing national leadership.

The important connections between people go back to the earliest days of Vermont. We have always had to rely on each other. That has made us strong and resilient. Everyone here shows that we have continued that tradition into the digital age, using technology to reinforce and create new bonds between us. It has been an honor to support and strengthen that during my Senate career, and I look forward to seeing how Vermonters continue to grow in connection with each other and the world.

#### RECOGNIZING CENTER FOR CIVILIANS IN CONFLICT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, in 2023 the Center for Civilians in Conflict will celebrate its 20th anniversary. This is a significant milestone, as I vividly recall when CIVIC, originally named the Campaign for Innocent Victims in Conflict, was created by Marla Ruzicka. When I first met Marla she was a 26-year-old dynamo from Lakeport, CA, who had gone to Afghanistan on her own to raise awareness about civilian casualties of U.S. military operations. Like many of us, she had read reports of repeated incidents of U.S. bombs missing their targets and wiping out whole neighborhoods, of innocent people being shot at checkpoints, and other deaths and injuries of civilians. Marla not only read about those tragic incidents; she became a one-woman campaign with a laptop who, within a few months of arriving in Kabul, was quoted in the New York Times and other publications, calling on the U.S. to do more to protect civilians and assist those who were harmed. As a result of her efforts, Congress created funds for both Afghanistan and Iraq, administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development, to provide such assistance, the latter fund named for Marla after she was killed, herself an innocent victim of war, in a car bombing in Baghdad on April 16, 2005.

While no one could replace Marla's vivaciousness and passion for the cause of protecting civilians in war, CIVIC survived that terrible loss and has since evolved into a global advocacy organization devoted to protecting civilians who increasingly bear the brunt of armed conflicts. Ukraine is a horrifying example that is on the front pages every day, but there are many others—in South Sudan, Yemen, Syria, and Burma to name a few.

In August, a year after the disastrous U.S. missile strike that killed a whole family in Kabul after multiple egregious intelligence failures, Secretary of Defense Austin released the Pentagon's own Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan. If fully implemented, it could significantly improve the way the Pentagon addresses civilian harm. CIVIC and other advocacy organizations have been calling for such reforms, as have I since as far back as when Marla was still alive. Congress even enacted legislation that specified procedures for evaluating claims and making *ex gratia* payments to eligible civilian victims, but the Pentagon ignored them. They also failed to utilize millions of dollars appropriated by Congress for this purpose, despite the obvious needs in Syria and elsewhere. So I welcome this long overdue step, but as currently envisioned, the action plan is prospective and does not contemplate investigations of past incidents of civilian casualties or assistance for those victims. That is wrong. It should provide for victims of past incidents, at least those for which credible information has already been collected, and I urge the